laid. The construction of the rail and road bridge between Ernakulam and Vendurutti which is a major work in connection with the fourth stage has made satisfactory progress. The screwing of cylinder foundation has been completed and six of the spans have been erected. The embankment for the rail and road bridge across Vendurutti has been formed and the minor bridges over the principal pathway and across the main drainage canal have been finished. A major part of the material for the harbour railway has been acquired and over 1½ miles of tract laid. On the Ernakulam side the diversion from Edapilly is making satisfactory progress. It is expected that the rail and road bridge between Ernakulam and Vendurutti would be finished by March 1939 and the railway construction completed by January 1940. The warehouse, the ships' wharf and the erection of the electric cranes at the wharf will all be completed before March 1939. The total estimated cost of the fourth stage works is Rs. 92·23 lakhs. Out of this amount about Rs. 53½ lakhs have been spent up to the end of March 1938. In addition to this Rs. 20 lakhs has also been spent on the purchase of a new dredger for the port. This Government's share in the cost of the fourth stage works is approximately Rs. 61·48 lakhs. Towards this liability we have so far paid about Rs. 43·80 lakhs, thus leaving about Rs. 17½ lakhs to be paid by us in the course of the next two years. In addition we have already paid Rs. 13⅓ lakhs, being our share of the cost of the new dredger. So far as our advance for the dredger is concerned, the Harbour Authority is bound to repay the amount to us with interest at 4 per cent per annum in 20 equated annual instalments. Repayment has already commenced. The advance for the fourth stage works will, as Honourable Members are already aware, be paid in equated instalments over a period of 30 years with interest at 5 per cent per annum beginning from 1946.

THE TRADE OF THE PORT.

8. The trade of the port continues to be satisfactory except for the drop in the import of sugar to which I have already made reference. For the year ending 31st March 1938 the total tonnage of trade was 780,500 tons made up of 151,700 tons of exports and 628,800 tons of imports. Striking variations from the averages of the previous three years are noticeable in a drop of 63,000 tons in grains and pulse, 10,000 tons in coal and sugar and an advance of 28,000 tons in mineral oils, 7,000 tons in machinery, 15,000 tons in other imports and an advance of 14,000 tons in export including 7,000 tons of cashew nuts and kernels. On the whole the total trade during the year was only 23,000

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

tons less than the average of the previous three years and this is largely accounted for by the heavy decline in imports of grains from Burma and the complete cessation of the import of broken rice from Siam owing largely to better crops in South India and the imposition of a duty on broken rice. The total number of steamships that entered the harbour during the year was 695 as against 774 in the previous year.

9. One factor which threatened to be a serious menace for the trade of the port during the year under review was the outbreak of plague at Mattancheri. Frequent outbreaks of plague in this area would be a very serious menace to the trade of the port as Mattancheri is a large grain centre and is particularly liable to infection. The importance of preserving Cochin's role as a rice depot for South India has drawn the attention of the Government and the Port Authority forcibly to the question of taking adequate measures to minimise if not to eradicate the outbreak of plague. It was considered by the Harbour Authority that the time was ripe for building modern rat-proof granaries on the Willingdon Island to deal with at least a part of the grain trade of the port. It is well known that to exclude rats granaries should be of substantial build and should have rat-proof floors in addition to being guarded properly and equipped with up-to-date fumigating appliances. The Port Authority thought that the erection of such modern granaries on the Willingdon Island together with the necessary shallow wharfage and equipment is necessary for preserving the grain trade of the port. The proposal, however, was viewed with suspicion and some amount of alarm by the merchants and the Chambers of Commerce as in their opinion such a course might cause serious inconvenience to the grain trade. With a view to meet the objections of the mercantile community an alternative scheme is being examined. The scheme involves a shallow reclamation and wharf, the demolition of the existing property between the water front and the Mattancheri bazaar road for a length of 2,400 ft and the raising of the level of the ground by about 3 ft. to admit of proper drainage and the construction of new business premises together with the widening of the existing road. The scheme is expected to cost approximately Rs. 18 lakhs apart from the expenses of acquiring the necessary land. The execution of the scheme if finally undertaken would be spread over a period of years. The materialisation of such a scheme would not merely prove to be the greatest safeguard for the trade of the port, but also result in the much needed town improvement to Mattancheri. The scheme, however, is so vast in magnitude that it will not be possible to undertake it without the willing co-operation and support

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

of the public and especially of the mercantile community. For a better appreciation of the financial implication of this comprehensive project plans and estimates are now under preparation. When the scheme is fully ready we expect to discuss the matter with all the interests concerned and then take a final decision.

TWO TRANSACTIONS.

10. I shall now briefly refer to the two transactions with the Harbour Authorities about which reference was made in the earlier part of my speech. In the current year we have received Rs. 3·37 lakhs as royalty on a portion of the Reclamation ground. This Reclamation ground comprising 337 acres was formed from the annual maintenance dredging operations of the Port Authorities. The reclaimed area is contiguous with the Willingdon Island. The Cochin Government has not incurred any expenditure on this reclamation which was done entirely at the cost of the Port Authorities. This is the only portion of the island the ownership of which had not been settled so far. We allowed the Port Authorities to exercise full rights of ownership over this area on payment of a royalty at the rate of Rs. 1,000 per acre. The amount of Rs. 3·37 lakhs referred to relates to this item. It has been made clear that the exercise of the rights of ownership over this area by the Port Authorities will be subject to the sovereignty and jurisdiction of His Highness the Maharaja. The other transaction referred to relates to the negotiations that are going on between the Governments of India and Cochin about 150 acres on the Willingdon Island. A reference to the first speech that I delivered in this Council in 1935 would enable Honourable Members to understand the terms and conditions on which the original 250 acres of the Willingdon Island were reclaimed. Reclamation of this area was undertaken at the cost of the Cochin Government which paid Rs. 37½ lakhs for this work. One hundred acres of this area which has cost us Rs. 15 lakhs is already in the possession of the Harbour Authorities, and we are getting an annual rental of Rs. 75,000 for this area. Though the terms of occupation of the remaining 150 acres have been settled we have not yet received a single pie of return on the investment of Rs. 22½ lakhs. As a result of a close examination of this question I came to the conclusion that it will be difficult to say when exactly the Harbour Authorities will be in a position to give us an adequate return on this big capital outlay. Taking all the factors into consideration the Cochin Government made an offer to sell this area to the Port Authority at an amount equivalent to the actual cost price of

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly